



GREETING

Sharing life is always the purpose of these pages. This issue of the newsletter collects some recent events from the past few months of 2014. The variety of processes taking place in the Provinces and Regions shows the richness of our diversity. But the many facets of the Marist charism convey the same strength coming from the Lord, who is present wherever there is this freshness and hope. The short texts we offer you are always accompanied by photographs regarding the developments that are taking place, trying to make them more explicit. The faces of brothers and lay people you will see are the incarnation of God in the life of our Institute.

I would like to highlight two recent events which have a special meaning and a particular international character. The first is the meeting on *lay bonding and belonging*. This four-day gathering strengthened the commitment of laity and brothers to the birth of a new era for the Marist charism. Although we reached no consensus, the group was highly motivated to carry on the reflection, knowing that this process towards communion is an irreversible path.

The second event was the third meeting of the *Champagnat Movement Update Commission*. They have gone through a two-year process that is now in its final stage. A number of challenges appear as obvious: expressing the "lay energy" of the Marist charism within the world; finding harmony between lay autonomy and communion; offering serious formation processes; and defining forms of lay bonding.

Best wishes from the Secretariat of Laity,
Javier



Internationality of the Geneva community

Brother Javier briefly visited the community of Geneva in January as part of the cooperation between Secretariats. The visit elicited a discussion about some common goals between the Secretariats, and was also a shared experience of internationality. For our Secretariats, internationality entails the challenge of integration, unity, and communion regarding essential values, unity and communion among all Marist, be it lay or brothers; unity and communion between the major projects of the Marist mission, on the one hand, and the details of a simple community life on the other. The community of Geneva integrates its universal perspective regarding the rights of children with the contemplation of the beautiful snowy mountains and meadows surrounding the house.

VI Meeting of the Laity in Venezuela

The VI Meeting of the Laity in Venezuela took place from January 17 to 19 at the Marist Formation House of Caracas. It defined a number of challenges regarding the future: ensuring the continuity of the charism; consolidating the local groups; training leaders to accompany the process; and promoting the lay Marist vocation through specific vocations ministry itineraries. Participants also reviewed the operational plan, and proposed a joint formation experience for laity and brothers to take place this year. The meeting concluded with a commitment to promote local gatherings in order to implement the outlined calls.





the Marist charism, since we all are, as Brother Emili said, Marists of Champagnat”. A number of small groups gathered around the tables discussed the priorities and urgencies challenging the laity in the Province. In March the Province will launch a new proposal regarding the *Lay Marist Groups*.

laity, joint formation, and Marist spirituality. There were three lectures aimed at enriching the group’s reflection: “Religious life and its relationship with the laity”, “Spirituality and joint formation”, and “Vocations and ministries in the Church”.

The Secretariat’s Co-directors Meeting

The Co-directors – Tony, Pep and Javier – met in Rome from February 13 to 17. This first meeting of the year is usually carried out while the General Council holds its plenary session. The meeting dealt with the Secretariat’s agenda, and was also an opportunity to dialogue with the *New Models of Management Commission*, and to share with Brother Antonio Ramalho, Link Councilor for the Secretariat. The program for the international meeting on *Bonding and Belonging* was studied during a meeting with the Council. The Co-directors presented the Council with a number of discussion points regarding some of the Secretariat’s activities in the past year, as well as some future challenges and actions.

Forum on joint formation and the new relationship between Brothers and Laity – Brasil Centro-Norte

A Forum for the leaders of Brasil



Centro-Norte held on February 20-21 revolved around the subject of joint formation and the new relationship between brothers and laity. The meeting was attended by more than 30 brothers and lay people who belong to different Provincial commissions and working groups, and by the Provincial Council. One of the goals of the meeting was to study and reflect about the meaning of the new relationship between brothers and

The animators of 23 fraternities meet in Curitiba – Brasil Centro-Sul

A total of 52 participants – lay animators representing 23 fraternities, and the brothers who accompany them – met in Curitiba from March 8 to 9. The reflection theme was “*The place of young people in the Champagnat*

Movement of the Marist Family”, in keeping with the ongoing revitalization process of the Movement. The meeting was a good opportunity for reflection, consolidation, renewal and

dialogue. One of the participants evaluated the meeting as follows:

“The problems and issues have been addressed deeply enough, especially when it came to laying Jesus Christ as the foundation of the CMMF path. We must never forget that Marcellin leads us to Jesus Christ, and that he is not an end in himself. The CMMF meetings always feel very ALIVE to me and to all members”.

I Forum on Laity and Shared Life – Brasil Centro-Sul

This II Provincial Forum took place with the participation of 30 laity and 12 brothers. A number of young people who are part of the Marist Provincial Youth Commission also took part in the first session. There was a talk about the Secretariat’s prospects, and the experiences promoting the lay vocation in the Province. The young people also spoke about their relationship with the Marist charism, and the challenge of its continuity. Trying to voice the group’s feelings, a lay woman stated: “I’m glad to stand next to the brothers and the laity, sharing life and new ways of expressing





International Meeting on Lay Bonding and Belonging

Invited by Brother Emili, 60 participants from 20 Administrative Units came to Rome on March 26-29 to discuss the topic of *Lay Bonding and Belonging*. Most members of the General Council, 8 Provincials, representatives from the Secretariats, and 21 lay people were among the participants.

At the beginning of the meeting, the participants deeply listened to different testimonies of lay Marists, the initiatives of other Congregations, and

to the Marist laity who choose a charismatic adherence.

- Open our hearts so that the Holy Spirit can act .

Meeting of CMMF Animators. Rio Grande do Sul

On March 8, around 60 people from 27 fraternities of Rio Grande do Sul participated in the Meeting of CMMF Animators. It was aimed at orienting the fraternities in their own formation process, and at defining proposals to live out our spirituality along with the fraternities.

Participants offered six key proposals to foster the experience of Marist Spirituality within the fraternities:

- Living together in the style of Mary.
- Despite our limitations and weaknesses, trust in God knowing we have been called.

- Through the Gospel, witnessing to Jesus and his love for those who are most in need.
- Seek to live out our Marist spirituality, and commit to practice Marist simplicity in our relationships and in the different areas of our life.
- Living the family spirit of Nazareth!
- Carry this message to other areas of our own life.

Meeting of the Laity and Brothers Commission of Oceania – Australia

This Commission met on March 4 and 5 in Sydney to discuss how to carry on accompanying Marist life in the Region. The members of the Commission represent the Administrative Units of Oceania: Mrs. Lucy Sinei and Br. Mark Kenasti (District of Melanesia); Mr. Daniel Dungey and Br. Carl Tapp (District of the Pacific); Mrs. Elizabeth Falconer and Mr. Joe McCarthy (Province of Australia); Br. Kevin Wanden (Oceania Council) and Mr. Tony Clarke (Secretariat of Laity). The meeting sought ways to develop a spirit of communion among everyone involved in Marist life and mission. The Commission defined some guidelines for the future: Promote interdependence and complementarity among all Marists; Identify and promote opportunities of specific formation, and joint formation for brothers and laity; Discern and creatively support the new ways of living out the Marist charism for laity and brothers.

The Commission expressed its desire to communicate the Marian face of the Church in Oceania through a model of shared life in a new communion between brothers and laity.



some experiences of communion within our Institute, such as: different forms of lay association (Marist Missionaries of Ciudad Juarez, vocational processes of Santa María de los Andes); lay associations with the presence of brothers (CMMF, Lay Movement of Canada), and an association of brothers and laity (Australia). At the end of the meeting the participants formulated some recommendations for the General Council and the Administrative Units. The final conclusion was that it is time to provide the laity with vocational discernment processes, and envision some kind of structure offering identity



Retreat session for laity and brothers in Canada

This retreat session took place at Maison de la Madone in Trois Rivières on April 11 to 13. Over sixty participants – brothers, laity, and young people – gathered for this time of reflection directed by Br. Javier Espinosa. There were moments of silence to become aware of God’s presence in our personal lives, and time for sharing and discovering God’s dream for the Marists of Quebec.

The group perceived several initiatives as a



fulfilment of God’s loving dream: the launching of the Lay Marist Association, aimed at spreading the Marist spirit; the centers of Vallée Jeunesse and Vie Nouvelle, which mobilize a number of people who are passionate in the service of young people; places like Laval School and SAJO, which claim to be Marist although no brothers work there; and the young Marist volunteers who are living missionary experiences in Latin America – this year in Colombia .

Champagnat Movement Update Commission

The Champagnat Movement Update Commission met in Rome from April 21 to 26. This meeting was aimed at planning the third stage of the process, which includes rewriting the *Life Project* defining the Movement’s identity, and producing a *Guide* indicating formation stages, forms of organization, and expressions of commitment and belonging. These documents will be written using the laity’s language. Outlining the meaning of “autonomy in communion” it is still a pending task, such as clearly defining what the Constitutions mean

by “extension of the Institute” (C 164.4) when referring to the Champagnat Movement. Brother Charles Howard’s words echoed during the meeting: “We consider this document as the first step of a process you will complete in the coming years”. The Commission restated that the Champagnat Movement has great potential as a lay expression of the charism lived out in the family, at work, in the midst of society, through the realities of the world, and in the Church.



Forming Vocations: an experiential formation initiative – Central America

The course entitled *Forming Vocations* was held in Guatemala from April 12 to 16 with the participation of lay Marists from Guatemala, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Costa Rica and Puerto Rico. It intended to be an experiential formation opportunity for the laity of Central America who want to embark in a personal journey of discernment in order to live according to the Marist spirituality and mission. This course was designed for lay men and women who wish to deepen their expe-

as Marists; people with a level of Marist identity and adherence that go beyond their professional duty, who come from any of the Marist settings (fraternity members, teachers, managers, pastoral leaders, etc.), and who are able to live an experience of internalization and silence. The course included three formation guidelines:

- personal experience as a manifestation of God (human dimension);
- following Jesus so as to encounter God and find my vocation (Christian dimension);
- the Marist charism as an expression of discipleship in the style of Marcellin (Marist dimension).

Participants left the meeting with a desire to be accompanied on this journey, and were more aware of this common Marist vocation uniting us and leading us to break new ground.



rience and commitment

Meeting of the Commission on Spirituality, Brothers and Laity for the Americas

The first meeting of this Commission took place at the University Residence of Lima, Peru, from April 30 to May 4, and counted with the participation of two representatives from each of its sub-commissions: Brothers Today, Spirituality, and Laity. There are three brothers and three lay Marists in this Commission. Brothers César Rojas, Javier Espinosa, and Libardo Garzón (Provincial of Norandina and President of the Inter-American Conference of Provincials) also participated. The purpose of the Commission is to identify common accents uniting the three sub-commissions, and envision paths of charismatic vitality in harmony and communion for the Provinces of the American Continent.



REFLECTION

"When we join together – laity and religious – we don't just add up our energy, we multiply it!"

(José María Arnaiz, marianist)

There is a growing conviction that laity and religious must share mission, vision and life. We drink from the same well, and we must irrigate our common field in the Church and in society using the same water: the charism we have received, certain facets of the Gospel that become a gift from the Spirit to the Church in the world through each of us. We need to get together. We need to create synergy. When we join together – laity and religious – we don't just add up our energy, we multiply it! We will probably not grow, and we could keep shrinking numerically if this does not happen. We really need each other in order to have life abundant. Without a doubt, unity is strength.

Clearly outlining, living, spreading, adapting, and witnessing to our charisms is the best way to revitalize them. This implies changing our language and speaking about "our founder or foundress", "our spirituality", "our mission project" in France, Kenya or Colombia; about "our works", "our houses", "our formation process", "our human and economic resources", "our presence"... It involves a unified vocations ministry effort, time to socialize and relax together, and a shared "prayer plan". Real friendship between laity and religious is very important.

Meeting of the Italian Fraternities in Giugliano

The three CMMF Fraternities of Italy met in Giugliano on April 25 and 26. They enjoyed two days of conviviality and reflection together. Based on their own experience and using some initial texts, they discussed the topic of family spirit, a meaningful point of reference for every Marist fraternity. The meeting was attended by Br. Ventura Pérez, Br. Fernando Hinojal, and Alfredo García, members of the Provincial Commission of Laity.



Fraternità Italiane 25/26 Aprile 2014 Giugliano